

What is Angina?

“The most common symptom of coronary artery disease is angina (also called angina pectoris). Angina is often referred to as chest pain. It is also described as chest discomfort, heaviness, tightness, pressure, aching, burning, numbness, fullness, or squeezing. It can be mistaken for indigestion or heartburn. Angina is usually felt in the chest but may also be felt in the left shoulder, arms, neck, back or jaw.”¹ This “recurring chest pain or discomfort happens when some part of the heart does not receive enough blood.”²

“If you have angina or any of the symptoms listed below that lasts for more than 5 minutes, SEEK EMERGENCY TREATMENT (CALL 9-1-1) WITHOUT DELAY. These symptoms could be the signs of a heart attack, and immediate treatment is essential:

- pain or discomfort in other areas of the upper body including the arms, left shoulder, back, neck, jaw, or stomach;
- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath;
- sweating or “cold sweat”;
- fullness, indigestion, or choking feeling (may feel like “heartburn”);



- nausea or vomiting;
- light-headedness, dizziness, extreme weakness or anxiety;
- rapid or irregular heart beats.”¹

Call 9-1-1. You are more likely to get treated faster at a hospital if you arrive by ambulance. Follow any directions the emergency personnel give you, which may include chewing an aspirin if there is no medical reason for you to avoid aspirin. If you have been prescribed nitroglycerin and you experience angina, stop what you are doing and rest, taking one nitroglycerine tablet (or spray under your tongue if prescribed in this form). Wait 5 minutes. If you still have angina after 5 minutes, call 9-1-1 – do not delay – continue taking your nitroglycerine as prescribed.¹

Sources

1. Cleveland Clinic (2010). Coronary artery disease – symptoms [online]. Retrieved January 5, 2010. From <http://my.clevelandclinic.org/heart/disorders/cad/cadsymptoms.aspx>.
2. Ohio State University Medical Center (2010). Glossary – cardiovascular diseases [online]. Retrieved January 5, 2010. From http://medicalcenter.osu.edu/patientcare/healthcare/services/heart/heart_disease_resources/about_heart_disease/heart_disease_glossary/pages/index.aspx.